

INDEPENDENT

Opera

COMPANY

Stage Director  
Scott Blois

Music Director  
Galina Barskaya

Media Release  
June 1, 2013  
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## **Macbeth**

Saturday June 15- Sunday June 30, 2013



Independent Opera Company concludes its **first season** with Verdi's *Macbeth*, an operatic representation of Shakespeare's epic drama of mysticism and tyranny.

An exciting production of foreboding, surrealism, and even comic relief.

Starring highly acclaimed baritones, Jay Stephenson and Michael Blinco double-cast in the title role of Macbeth.

Only 5 performances! Limited Seating!

LOS ANGELES, California- June 2013- **Independent Opera Company** will present the final production of their first season. *Macbeth* is a remarkable representation of Shakespeare's epic drama. It tells of Macbeth and his wife as they go on a killing spree in a desperate attempt to maintain the throne of Scotland. They are propelled by the prophecies of witches and as these omens eventualize, the couple lose their grip on the power they seek. Verdi brings us in to a piece that is beautiful in its eeriness. *Macbeth* is a very sophisticated work with a lot of surprising and unexpected harmonies and rhythms. It seems very unconventional and predicts a lot of musical solutions presented at Verdi's more familiar later works, such as *Traviata*, plus it leads to his most mature works like *Otello* and *Falstaff* (also based on Shakespeare plays). What makes *Macbeth* so appealing as an opera is that although it is a very dark story, it has catharsis which provides great emotional relief and healing. The plot and the music give the widest range of human emotions from pride to betrayal to despair to justice. It tells us a story of temptation and ambitions gone awry and reminds us that "goals never justify means". In the end, justice prevails, but the price paid by suffering and precious human lives cannot be redeemed. This opera has a truly timeless story and is full of excitement and beauty! And it's the music that makes it even more powerful. Verdi uses the chorus to play a crucial role in this opera. Despite all the intensity of this piece, we are all truly enjoying ourselves in these rehearsals! Our incredible stage director, Scott Blois, always has such brilliant creative ideas and makes even most challenging scenes look and sound effortless.

7714 Goodland Ave  
North Hollywood, CA 91605  
818.458.5048

Acclaimed baritones, Jay Stephenson and Michael Blinco star as Macbeth and each bring their own distinctive skills to the role: Jay concentrating on complexities of Macbeth's character and Michael highlighting the torment of Macbeth's soul. Both Lady Macbeths, Erica Lazerow and Natalie Mann, make this challenging role seem effortless. All three Bancos, Terry Welborn, Herve Blanquart and Patrick Blackwell, possess very powerful voices and wonderful acting skills. James Salazar as Macduff presents the role through the sheer beauty and expressiveness of his voice. Two powerful tenors, Conor Karrel and Andrew Bennett, portray Malcolm and there are two very special Ladys-in Waiting, Cynthia Leigh and Victoria Graves. Tu Nguyen, Medico, has sung in each of IOC's productions since its inception. Ali Borboa, Christa Stevens, Jennifer Lindsay, Jessica Gonzalez-Rodrigues, Christie Lynn Lawrence and Belinda Wilkins have all been cast as the witches and are all accomplished vocalists who shine in these roles.

Created in the spring of 2012, Independent Opera Company is committed to presenting the highest quality performances at affordable prices. IOC explores a wide range of operas from different styles, periods, and countries. Young and seasoned singers work together in harmony to give audiences a chance to experience the magical and transforming power of opera. Macbeth will conclude Independent Opera Company's first season which consisted of 4 full length opera. This season has been extremely well-received to a broad Los Angeles audience.

Electronic Press Kits including videos, photos, and interviews can be found online at:

[www.independentoperacompany.com](http://www.independentoperacompany.com)

Performance Details: ***Macbeth***

**Dates:**

Saturday	June 15, 2013	7PM
Sunday	June 16, 2013	7PM
Saturday	June 22, 2013	3PM
Sunday	June 23, 2013	6PM
Sunday	June 30, 2013	3PM

**Venues:**

St. Andrew's Lutheran Church (6/15, 6/16)  
11555 National Blvd, Los Angeles, CA 90064

Lutheran Church of the Master (6/22, 6/23)  
10931 Santa Monica Blvd, Los Angeles, CA 90025

Mt. Olive Lutheran Church (6/30)  
1343 Ocean Park Blvd, Santa Monica, CA 90405

**Tickets:**

Tickets can be purchased for \$10 or \$20 at:

[macbeth1.brownpapertickets.com](http://macbeth1.brownpapertickets.com)  
[macbeth2.brownpapertickets.com](http://macbeth2.brownpapertickets.com)  
[macbeth3.brownpapertickets.com](http://macbeth3.brownpapertickets.com)

# THE CAST

## Cast:

Macbeth - Jay Stephenson/Michael Blinco  
Lady Macbeth - Erica Lazerow/Natalie Mann  
Banco - Herve Blanquart/Patrick Blackwell/Terry James Welborn  
Dama di Lady - Victoria Graves/Cynthia Leigh  
Macduff - James Salazar  
Malcolm - Andrew Bennett/Conor Karrel  
Medico/Domestico - Tu Nguyen  
Witches: Christa Stevens, Jennifer Lindsay, Ali Borboa, Christie Lynn Lawrence, Jessica Gonzalez-Rodriguez, Belinda Wilkins

## Bios:

### **Macbeth, Jay Stephenson**

Since moving from Canada to Los Angeles five years ago, Jay Stephenson has been captivating local audiences with his sonorous baritone and superb acting. Jay is much sought after for his clear tone, considerable vocal range, and his sincere commitment to the characters he portrays. "As Olegin, Jay Stephenson's baritone was robust and full-throated. He conveyed each nuance of Olegin's character ... An excellent performance." He has sung with Casa Italiana Opera, Independent Opera Company, Opera York, Center Stage Opera, Celestial Opera, Lyric Opera of Los Angeles, Los Angeles Metropolitan, Repertory Opera Company, Brampton Lyric Opera, as well as Opera Kitchener; and has performed various principle roles including Papageno, Guglielmo, Gianni Schicchi, Silvio, Ben, Belcore, Schaunard, Don Alfonso, Valentin, and Rigoletto. Other highlights include Gernot, in Richard Wagner's first opera, *Die Feen*, with the Lyric Opera of Los Angeles; and Anthony Chevalier in the world premiere of *Marie's Orchard* by Philip Weston for Center Stage Opera. Jay is honored to be returning to Independent Opera Company in the title role of MacBeth.

### **Macbeth, Michael Blinco**

Baritone Michael Blinco attended Chapman Conservatory where, under the watchful eye of famed Soprano Carol Neblett, he developed a strong sense of character and musicality. He was given the special opportunity to perform early and often while in school in the roles of Sid in *Albert Herring*, Simone in *Gianni Schicchi* and the title role in Pasatieri's *Signor Deluso*. Professionally, Michael has been performed with Chicago Lyric, Los Angeles Opera and San Diego Opera Chorus and has performed The Messenger in Verdi's *La Traviata*, Footman and Waiter in Strauss' *Der Rosnkavalier*, and Sargent in Rossini's *Il Barbiere di Siviglia* with San Diego and with Pacific Opera Project as Guglielmo in Mozart's *Così Fan Tutte*. He has also appeared regularly with Bach Collegium San Diego and won critical acclaim for his Christus in Bach's *Johannespassion*. During the summer of 2011 Michael made his international debut with Tuscia Operafestival in Italy performing Marcello in *La Bohème*, and il Conte in *Le Nozze di Figaro*.

### **Lady Macbeth, Erica Lazerow**

With a voice the LA Times called "opulent," Erica Lazerow Davis is known for her beautiful high notes and strong acting. While she has established herself in Southern California performing opera with companies such as the Independent Opera Company, LA Metropolitan Opera, AVC Opera, Pasadena Lyric Opera, and USC Opera, she has also performed on the east coast and with such companies as Opera in the Ozarks. Her roles have included Gilda in Verdi's *Rigoletto*, Queen of the Night in Mozart's *The Magic Flute*, Tatiana in Tchaikovsky's *Eugene Onegin*, Rosalinda in Strauss's *Die Fledermaus*, Micaëla in Bizet's *Carmen*, Miss Wordsworth in Britten's *Albert Herring*, and First Lady in Mozart's *The Magic Flute*. Also praised for her concert work, her performances have included Handel's Messiah, Bach's Cantata 80, and Britten's *The Company of Heaven*, among others. Ms. Lazerow Davis can be heard on the CD "O sacrum convivium" in which she performs with the chamber ensemble Convivia. In addition to her solo career, Erica is on the faculty at CSU Northridge and College of the Canyons and has a private vocal studio in Santa Clarita. Her students have been featured in performances throughout the Los Angeles area.

### **Lady Macbeth, Natalie Mann**

Soprano Natalie Mann hails from the Midwest, but her singing career has seen numerous performance opportunities across the globe in Europe and Australia, and in December 2011 took her to China with the South Shore Orchestra. Ms. Mann made her debut as a soloist with the Chicago Symphony Orchestra and her solo Carnegie Hall debut with much acclaim. A recipient of a Metropolitan Opera Encouragement Award and numerous other prizes, she is heard on both the operatic and concert stage. Critic Abigail Wright penned in her critique that "...Ms. Mann does an excellent job of continuing her brilliantly sustained legato, undeniably stunning high notes, and impressive quality of pitch and tone center across the board." An active recitalist and champion of contemporary music, Ms. Mann has collaborated with composers Lori Laitman and Richard Pearson Thomas, and is currently working on a CD of their music to be released by Albany Records. Ms. Mann earned a Doctor of Music from Indiana University in Vocal Performance and a Master of Creative Arts from the University of Wollongong in Australia, funded through the Rotary Ambassadorial Scholar program. Her Bachelor of Music degree was awarded by Butler University, where she attended on full scholarship. She is currently a faculty member at Moreno Valley College teaching voice.

### **Banco, Herve Blanquart**

Bass Hervé Blanquart grew up near Amiens in northern France. Since moving to Southern California in 1993, Hervé has performed with the Los Angeles Opera, Santa Barbara Opera and his recent performance as an actor in "Don Quixote" with the San Diego Opera received great reviews. Hervé is delighted to sing the role of Banco, and his other favorite roles include Philip II in Verdi's *Don Carlo*, *Don Giovanni*, and Sarastro in Mozart's *The Magic Flute*.

**Banco, Patrick Blackwell**

During the summer of 2011 Bass-Baritone Patrick Blackwell made two important concert debuts; the first under the baton of Lorin Maazel as a part of the Castleton Festival in which he sang Porgy in Gershwin's masterpiece *Porgy and Bess*, and the second in a similar concert presentation under Simon Rattle with the Boston Symphony Orchestra at Tanglewood. He has recently portrayed this title character in a full-scale production in St. Louis and also on tour in Europe. Mr. Blackwell's 2011-2012 season includes performances of the role of Tom in *Un Ballo in Maschera* in a debut with New Orleans Opera and a return to Fresno Grand Opera to perform the role of Joe in Hammerstein & Kern's *Show Boat*, a role he has also performed with Rockwell Productions in Vancouver, Canada. This season also includes an important international debut with the Munich Philharmonic under the baton of Maestro Maazel in *Porgy and Bess* and 2014 Mr. Blackwell will be singing Ratcliffe in *Billy Budd* with Los Angeles Opera. Blackwell has trained and studied with Enrico DiGuiseppe at the Juilliard School and began his career as a young artist with the Santa Fe Opera, Houston Opera Studio, the Merola Opera Program with San Francisco Opera, Opera Music Theatre International with Jerome Hines and the Aspen Opera Theatre Center.

**Banco, Terry James Welborn**

Since 2011, Terry James Welborn has sung leading roles with six different opera companies: L.A. Metropolitan, Pacific Opera Project, Celestial Opera, Independent Opera Company, Vineyard Touring Company and Casa Italiana. His vocal range allows him to sing such diverse roles as Sarastro (*The Magic Flute*), Gremin (*Eugene Onegin*) in bass repertory, to *Rigoletto*, Elder Germont (*L Traviata*), Enrico (*Lucia di Lammermoor*) in baritone repertory. He has garnered outstanding reviews of his voice such as: "...his voice had a ringing edge that could be heard in the street: (Lauri's List) and "He sang with an easy, capable voice with plenty of range." (Riverside Press Enterprise).

**Dama di Lady, Victoria Graves**

After moving from Texas, Lyric Mezzo-Soprano Victoria Graves made her California debut as Marian in the new rock musical, *The Door*. Other recent roles also include Mrs. Segstrom (*A Little Night Music*), First Witch (*Dido & Aeneas*), and Edith (*Pirates of Penzance*). This June, she will also be performing at the Hollywood Fringe Festival in various roles including a frog, a nymph, and a fisherman's wife in *Aesopera*, a new opera based on Aesop's fables. Victoria received her Bachelor of Music degree from Baylor University and has also completed training with the OperaWorks Winter Intensive Program and the Taos Opera Institute. Although she has absolutely loved performing in Los Angeles this past year, Victoria is leaving this fall to pursue her Master's degree in Classical Voice at New York University.

**Dama di Lady, Cynthia Leigh**

Cynthia Leigh brings a special presence to the main stage with her committed performances and unique voice. This season, Ms. Leigh sang Violetta in *La Traviata* and The Mother in *Amahl and the Night Visitors* with Independent Opera in Los Angeles, with Riverside Lyric Opera and California Ballet Opera, and in Rutter's Requiem with San Diego Festival Orchestra. Other appearances include Violetta in *La Traviata* with Tuscia Opera Festival and Opera in the Ozarks; Queen of the Night in *Die Zauberflöte* and Lucia in *Lucia di Lammermoor* with Riverside Lyric Opera; Rosalinda in *Die Fledermaus* with North County Opera Soirée, and the three heroines in *Les Contes d'Hoffmann* with Vertical Players in New York City. Recent roles with Celestial Opera include Amore in *Orpheus ed Eurydice*, Mme. Goldentrill in *The Impresario*, Nella in *Gianni Schicchi* and Lucia (cover) in *Lucia di Lammermoor*. The Sacramento Bee said, "A large, expressive voice that was full and vibrant in the upper ranges." The Arkansas Times said, "Leigh's acting during [*La Traviata*] brought this writer close to tears." Cynthia's sacred works include soprano soloist in the Requiems of Fauré, Verdi and Rutter.

**Macduff, James Salazar**

A true lyric tenor, James Salazar has sung leading roles with most of LA's independent opera companies. Just three years since taking his first lead, he has performed principal roles in productions by the great masters of opera: Rodolfo in Puccini's *La Bohème*, Manrico in Verdi's *Il Trovatore*, Ferrando in Mozart's *Così fan tutte*, Don Jose in Bizet's *Carmen*, Mario in Puccini's *Tosca*, Romèo in Gounod's *Romèo et Juliette*, the Duke in Verdi's *Rigoletto* and Dr. Faust in Gounod's *Faust*. Recently, he has added Edgardo in Donizetti's *Lucia Di Lammermoor* and Canio in Leoncavallo's *Pagliacci*. As an actor, Mr. Salazar follows the best European traditions in creating a heroic tenor persona onstage with equal ability to project a sympathetic romantic character when needed. His musicality and perceptive interpretations of each role make his characters real to the audience and his effortless, soaring high notes identify him as a rising star on the local operatic scene.

**Malcolm, Andrew Bennett**

Andrew Bennett of Santa Monica, California began studying under Seth Riggs at the age of 16 as a baritone then soon moved into the tenor repertoire. He graduated from the University of Southern California with a Bachelor of Music in Vocal Performance in 2009. In July of 2012, Andrew sang the role of Nemorino in Donizetti's *L'elisir d'amore* with the International Lyric Academy of Rome and Viterbo. He has also sung with the San Diego Opera Chorus, Utah Festival Opera, and was featured in a recital for the Santa Monica-Westside Philharmonic Committee of the LA Philharmonic Orchestra. Having recently completed the 2013 season with San Diego Opera Chorus including *Aida*, *Samson and Delilah* and *Murder in the Cathedral*, in June he will be joining Center Stage Opera in *L'elisir d'amore*. He continues to study with Seth Riggs and cantors at St. Monica's Catholic Church.

**Malcolm, Conor Karrel**

Macbeth will mark Conor Karrel's second show with Independent Opera Company as he just played Frid and Mr. Erlanson in their production of *A Little Night Music* in April. Conor is a founding member of the Crescent Troupe, a new Shakespeare and classics oriented theatre company, and has produced two shows for them in the last year and looks forward to doing more in the near future. He also performed the roles of Duncan/Malcolm in *The Scottish Play* and Petruccio in an abridged version of *The Taming of The Shrew*. Conor also spent ten years on stage in Chicago in such shows as *Into The Woods* playing Rapunzel's Prince and The Wolf, *Evita* as Magaldi; *Oklahoma* as Will Parker, *Guys & Dolls* as Sky Masterson; Sondheim's *Assassins* as The Balladeer, and *Jesus Christ Superstar* as Peter. He's happy to be a featured performer in his first opera and is enjoying the challenge of learning the role while simultaneously acting as the assistant director.

**Medico/Domestico, Tu Nguyen**

Tu Nguyen is a Los Angeles-based composer and performer. He is self-taught in the violin and began studying classical sax at 14. After arriving at UCLA, Tu began studying classical voice performance and the erhu, a traditional Chinese, two-stringed, bowed instrument. He regularly performs on the erhu with the Music of China ensembles at UCLA. He has also performed new chamber music under Grammy Award-winning pianist, Gloria Cheng, and choral music with conductor Donald Neuen. Tu sings with the Angeles Chorale and has performed for film composer and conductor, David Newman, as well as for Gustavo Dudamel and the LA Philharmonic in a performance of Mahler's 8th Symphony. He has sung with Independent Opera Company since its inception. Tu is also part of the Long Beach New Music Collective and recently premiered a new quartet for woodwinds and piano. In addition to writing concert music, Tu scores films and video games. His projects have garnered award recognition at film festivals around the world. Tu graduated Cum Laude with a B.A. in Ethnomusicology, Emphasis in Composition and Performance and a minor in Japanese Language. He currently studies voice with Reid Bruton.

**First Witch, Christa Stevens**

Christa Stevens is a lyric soprano from Redlands, California. She received her MM in Voice Performance from Cal-State Northridge and her BA in Music and English Literature from The University of Redlands. She is co-founder, music director and a vocalist with Redlands Opera Theatre, a member of the Wagner Ensemble and an award-winning voice and piano instructor. She is soprano section leader and cantor at La Purisima Church in Orange and is a guest vocalist at Church of Our Savior Episcopal, San Gabriel in their annual "Music for a Season" concert series. Recent appearances include soprano soloist in Mozart's Coronation Mass at Holy Family Cathedral in Orange, soprano soloist in Handel's Messiah with the Orange County Symphony, a solo recital for the Riverside Opera Guild, Mrs. Anderssen in Sondheim's *A Little Night Music* with Independent Opera Company and soprano soloist in Haydn's *The Seasons* with the Wagner Ensemble. Future appearances include Mrs. Gobineau in Menotti's *The Medium* with Redlands Opera Theatre and soprano soloist in Dvorak's *Te Deum* with the San Diego Festival Chorus. [www.christastevens.com](http://www.christastevens.com)

**First Witch, Jennifer Lindsay**

Jennifer Lindsay is a lyric soprano and violinist. She has studied voice privately for over 20 years with teachers at Pomona College, Manhattan School of Music, the Peabody Conservatory, and she is currently concertmaster of the Bellflower Symphony Orchestra. Jennifer also works as a project manager and software developer in Long Beach, CA. This is her operatic debut and she is thrilled to be participating in this production with Independent Opera Company.

**Second Witch, Ali Borboa**

Alexandra Borboa is a soprano based in the Los Angeles area. A graduate of the University of the Pacific's Conservatory of Music, she is known for her rich, warm tone. Her notable roles have included Angelica in Puccini's *Sour Angelica* and Sally in *Die Fledermaus*. She has been featured as a soloist in various oratorios with choral groups as well.

**Second Witch, Christie Lynn Lawrence**

Christie Lynn Lawrence is a multi-talented singer, dancer and actress. You may have seen her Belly dancing at the famous Dar Mahgreb in Hollywood, singing and acting in an opera, or heard her singing on a film soundtracks. Christie has been a guest of the Savonlinna Opera Festival in Finland, the ninth lady in the World Premiere of Nicholas and Alexandra with Placido Domingo, created the role of Olympia in *La Traviata* for the LA Opera DVD with Rene Fleming, was a gambler in *Manon*, and a solo voice in *Die Frau ohne Schatten*, all with Los Angeles Opera. She has also sung with Luciano Pavarotti, Anna Netrebko, Joan Sutherland and many other world class singers. She has worked with directors Franco Zeffirelli, Julie Taymor, Garry Marshall, and conductors Richard Bonyngue, John Williams, Esa Pekka Solonen, and Grant Gershon. Christie has also sung internationally in Granada, Spain, at the "Canciones Espanoles Festival" and performed many solo recital tours for Columbia Artists Community Concerts. Her critically acclaimed One Woman Cabaret Show "Dysfunctional Love Songs" is well known throughout the southland. In June, you can see her as a solo witch in the Independent Opera Company's production of "Macbeth" or on the Queen Mary performing her Opera Belly dance act. In addition to performing, Christie also teaches.

**Third Witch, Jessica Gonzalez-Rodriguez**

Jessica Gonzalez-Rodriguez Mezzo-Soprano Jessica is a native of Los Angeles, CA. She began her education in voice at the age of 13 under the instruction of Soprano, Melodee Fernandez. She graduated with a B.A. in Music from Mount Saint Mary's College. There she studied with Luke McEndarfer, director of the Paulist Choristers and Chet Swiatkowski, a studio musician who has collaborated with John Williams and Yo-Yo Ma. She received a Master of Music degree in Vocal Performance from California State University, Los Angeles, under the instruction of Dr. David Connors. She has performed in the CSULA Opera productions of *Dido & Aeneas*, *L'ile de Tulipatan*, *El Duo de la Africana* and sang the role of Peggy in Lee Hoiby's *This is the Rill Speaking*. Since completing graduate school she has participated in the Santa Monica College Opera workshop and has performed the role of Aurora in *Doña Francisquita* (scenes), Sesto in *Giulio Cesare* (scenes), covered the role of Dorabella in *Così fan tutte*, Hansel in *Hansel and Gretel* (scenes) and is currently preparing the role of Octavian in *Der Rosenkavalier* (scenes). She recently performed in the Center Stage Opera production of *Sour Angelica* as Suor Dolcina.

**Third Witch, Belinda Wilkins**

Belinda Wilkin's opera roles include Dorabella, Cherubino, Nichlaus and Siebel. She performs in elementary schools with Guild Opera as Mother and Grandmother in Seymour Barab's opera *Little Red Riding Hood*. She is also a member of the opera chorus at Los Angeles Opera. Belinda holds degrees in Music from both UCLA and USC.

**Galina Barskaya, Music Director**

Galina Barskaya began studying piano at the age of four and started to perform professionally at the age of seven. She received her BM and MM at Kiev State College and Kiev State Conservatory where she studied piano, organ, conducting, music history, and composition. She toured extensively in Russia, Ukraine, and other parts of the former USSR. Since coming to the United States in 1993, Ms. Barskaya has established herself as a soloist, chamber musician, accompanist, and teacher. She has also been working as a conductor and music director. Ms. Barskaya has been on staff at Santa Monica College and California State University at Long Beach and has been a member and founding member of several chamber ensembles. In the Los Angeles area, she has performed at numerous venues including the Alex Theater and the Hollywood Bowl. She's been involved in different religious music programs as Music Director/Conductor as well as pianist/organist including Emerson UU Church, Kehillat Israel, and Lutheran Church of the Master. She created the "Musical Explorations" concert series and from 2001 to 2009 served as founding Artistic Director. She was also Music Director of the Pacific Palisades-based opera company LA Metropolitan Opera from 2009 to 2012. Presently, she is on faculty at Occidental College, Music Director at St. Andrews Lutheran Church, Music Director of Mesopotamian Opera Company, and the Founding Music Director/CEO of Independent Opera Company. Galina is also a composer, whose music was recently featured in an educational film titled "Birth in Action."

**Scott Blois, Stage Director**

Scott Blois has a Bachelor's of Music from California State University, Northridge. He has worked for over twenty years in the Los Angeles Opera Chorus and has made two major observations while watching internationally known directors and conductors: 1) what to do and 2) what NOT to do. He continues to be humbled and grateful for the hard work and enthusiasm the singing actors in this company bring to their roles. Scott has also directed previous Independent Opera Company performances.